

Heloisa Helena, a socialist woman for the Brazilian presidential elections

Thursday 31 August 2006, by [LÖWY Michael](#) (Date first published: 20 August 2006).

Brazil is one of the countries with the highest level of social inequality in the world. The country has been described as a sort of “Swiss India,” where the rich live as though in Switzerland, while the lives of the poor are similar to those of their counterparts in India.

The electoral victory of Lula, the candidate of the Workers’ Party (PT), in 2001, raised immense popular hopes that this condition of “social apartheid” would change and that a new orientation towards the needs and aspirations of the poor would be implemented. These hopes were, to a large extent, disappointed as the government formed by Lula continued to implement the same neo-liberal economic policies as the previous right-wing presidents. One can speak of a “social-liberal” government in so far as the neo-liberal economic orientation — severe cuts in social programs in order to pay back the debt to foreign banks — was complemented with some social measures for the poorest layers, such as the program “Zero Hunger.”

One of the first neo-liberal reforms introduced by Lula was a change in the Brazilian pensions system, dismantling previous social benefits accorded to workers. When PT senator Heloisa Helena and a few other PT members of parliament opposed this reform — which had always been rejected by the PT while it was in opposition — they were excluded from the PT in spite of wide protests both in Brazil and internationally. A statement signed by well known figures of the left across the world called on the PT leadership not to expel her, but to no avail. Heloisa Helena and her friends, with the support of hundreds of other ex-PT activists, decided to create a new party, the PSOL, Party of Socialism and Liberty (“sol” in Brazilian also means ‘sun’). Two years later, after a serious corruption scandal involving some of the main leaders of the PT, an important section of the party’s left, including several members of parliament and well known figures of the Christian left, decided to join the new party.

Heloisa Helena, the candidate of the PSOL for the coming presidential elections in Brazil (October 2006) was born in Alagoas, one of the poorest states of Brazil. A nurse by profession, she was elected senator and soon became a leading figure in the PT’s left, before her exclusion. She is a young woman of remarkable charismatic power and the only female candidate in these elections; a Christian Marxist, she does not hide her commitment to socialism, to anti-imperialism and to the struggle of the Brazilian workers and peasants for social liberation. Her fiery speeches in the Senate, denouncing political corruption and the policies favoring the oligarchy, have gained her much popular sympathy, well beyond the organized ranks of the radical left.

While Lula and Alckmin — the candidate of the conservative right-wing coalition — were expected to monopolize the presidential election, the presence of Heloisa Helena introduced a new and unexpected dimension in the political debate: she is the only candidate to raise a radical criticism of neo-liberalism from a socialist perspective. She has received the support of a large spectrum of socialists, trade unionists, leftist intellectuals and Christian liberationists, and she currently stands at 12% in the opinion polls.

The elections in Brazil concern socialists and radicals everywhere. This is the reason why many

people, after having protested against Heloisa Helena's expulsion from the PT, have now issued a world-wide call to support her.

Socialists of the World Support Heloisa Helena

Many of us signed, two years ago, a protest against the exclusion of Heloisa Helena and other members of parliament from the PT, the Brazilian Workers Party.

Today, Heloisa has become the presidential candidate of the new Party of Socialism and Liberty (PSOL), founded by several bureaucratically excluded or dissident members of the PT, and of the Left Front. While Lula's government followed a typical social-liberal course, disappointing millions of people who voted for him in the hope of a radical social and political change, and people all over the world who expected from Brazil a new impulse for anti-imperialist struggle, Heloisa Helena and her comrades remained faithful to the original anti-imperialist and socialist programme of the PT.

She is today the candidate in the Brazilian elections who raises the historical banners of the Brazilian labour movement, of the peasants, the poor and the oppressed:

- a radical agrarian reform,
- suspension of the payment of the foreign debt,
- rejection of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA),
- a substantial reduction of working hours without loss of pay,
- a moratorium on the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (such as Monsanto's Terminator seeds),
- support for the ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba).

The elections in Brazil are of concern for socialists everywhere in the world. In solidarity with the poor and the exploited Brazilian masses, we support the socialist candidate in the next Brazilian presidential elections, Heloisa Helena.

Principal signatories so far (all in a personal capacity unless otherwise indicated):

Gilbert Achcar, university professor and author

Michael Albert, editor, Z-Net

Anthony Arrove, International Socialist Organisation, US

Ecehan Balta, Freedom and Solidarity Party/ODP. Turkey

Chris Bambery, editor, Socialist Worker, London

José Barreto, Coordinator, Carabobo Region of the National Union of Workers (UNT), Venezuela

Emilio Bastidas, Coordinator, Aragua Region of the National Union of Workers (UNT), Venezuela

Daniel Bensaïd, LCR, France

Olivier Besancenot, presidential candidate, LCR, France

Alister Black, International Committee, Scottish Socialist Party

José Boda, Executive member, Oilworkers' Union, Fedepetrol, Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela

Alejandro Bodart, national leadership, Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST), Argentina

Patrick Bond, political economist, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Peter Boyle, national secretary, Democratic Socialist Perspective, Australia

Sue Branford, writer on Latin America

Robert Brenner, economist, US
Andrew Burgin, Press Secretary, Stop the War Coalition, England and Wales
Alex Callinicos, Socialist Workers Party, Britain
David Camfield, associate professor, Labour Studies, University of Manitoba, Canada
Salvatore Cannavo, national deputy, Party of Communist Refoundation, Italy
Kunal Chattopadhyay, Inquilabi Communist Sangathan, India
Orlando Chirino, National Coordinator of the National Union of Workers (UNT) Venezuela
Noam Chomsky, MIT, Boston, US
Choo Chon Kai, Parti Socialis Malaysia
Joan Collins, Dublin City Councillor, Campaign for an Independent Left, Ireland
Denise Comane, Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt, Belgium
Brenda Coughlin, Department of Sociology, Columbia University, New York, USA
Frances Curran MSP, Scottish Socialist Party
Mike Davis, University of San Diego, California
Roland Denis, on behalf of Proyecto Nuestra America/M-13 de Abril, Venezuela
Espacio Alternativo, Spanish State
Samuel Farber, Professor of Political Science, Brooklyn College, New York
Colin Fox MSP, convenor, Scottish Socialist Party
Nick Fredman, national councillor, National Tertiary Education Union, Australia
Ana Gabarró, member of the National Council of the Catalan United Left, Spanish state
Richard Gallardo, National Coordinator of the National Union of Workers (UNT) Venezuela
Marcos García, National Coordinator of the Public Employees Union (FENTRASEP), Venezuela
Franck Gaudichaud, Doctor of Political Science, France, and member of Rebellion.org
Lindsey German, convenor, Stop the War Coalition, England and Wales
Gustavo Giménez, Movimiento Sin Trabajo (Unemployed Movement) "Teresa Vive", Argentina
Mike Gonzalez, Professor of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University
Tony Gregory, Independent TD, Dublin Central, Ireland
George Grollios, university professor, Thessaloniki, Greece
Joe Harrington, Former Mayor of Limerick City, Ireland
Rudy Hartono, National Student League for Democracy, Indonesia
Richard Hatcher, Director of Research, Faculty of Education, University of Central England, Birmingham
Ismael Hernández, Coordinator, Carabobo Region of the National Union of Workers (UNT), Venezuela
Dave Hill, Professor of Educational Policy at the University of Northampton, England
Gill Hubbard, Scottish Socialist Party
Linus Jayatilake, President, United Federation of Labour, Sri Lanka
Choo Chon Kai, Parti Socialis, Malaysia
Dr Vickramabahu Karunaratna, President, Left Front, Sri Lanka
Claudio Katz, economist, Argentina
Alain Krivine, LCR, France
Dharmasiri Lankapeli, General Secretary, Media Employees Federation, Sri Lanka
Michael Lavalette, Preston City Councillor for Respect, England
Paul Laverty, screenwriter
John Lister, London Health Emergency
Ken Loach, filmmaker
Francisco Louçã, Member of Parliament, Left Bloc, Portugal
Michael Lowy, sociologist, Paris
Eduardo Lucita, EDI (Economistas de Izquierda), Argentina
Finian McGrath, Independent TD, Dublin North-Central, Ireland
Patricia McKenna, former Member of the European Parliament, Irish Green Party

Luigi Malabarba, senator, Party of Communist Refoundation, Italy
 Alan Maass, editor, Socialist Worker, US
 Ismail Manouzi, publishing director, Al Mounadhil-a, Morocco
 José Melendez, Finance Secretary, Steelworkers' Union (SUTISS), Venezuela
 John Moloney Public and Civil Service Union NEC member, Britain
 People's Democratic Party (KPP-PRD), Indonesia (Dita Indah Sari, Chairperson; Zely Ariane, Department of International Relations)
 Pedro Montes, economist, member of the Federal Presidency of Izquierda Unida/United Left, Spanish state
 Daisy Mules, Derry Trades Union Council and Sinn Féin member, Ireland
 Jaime Pastor, member of the Federal Political Council of Izquierda Unida/United Left, Spanish state
 John Percy, Democratic Socialist Perspective, Australia
 Stalin Pérez Borges, National Coordinator of the National Union of Workers (UNT) Venezuela
 James Petras, Professor Emeritus, adviser, MST in Brazil
 Michael Pruetz, WASG (Berlin leadership), Germany
 Lluís Rabell, member of the National Council of the Catalan United Left, Spanish state
 Mick Rafferty, Dublin City Councillor (Independent), Ireland
 John Rees, national secretary, Respect Party, England and Wales
 Andy Reid, Public and Civil Service Union NEC member, Britain
 Revolta Global, Catalunya
 Vilma Ripoll, city deputy, Buenos Aires, and leader of MST, Argentina
 Teresa Rodríguez, member of the Federal Presidency of Izquierda Unida/United Left, Spanish state
 Edgard Sánchez, on behalf of the Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), Mexico
 Alfredo Saad Filho, university professor, London
 Stephen R. Shalom, political scientist, US
 Ahmed Shawki, editor, International Socialist Review, US
 Virginia de la Siega, member of the LCR national committee, France
 I.K. Shukla, writer, Los Angeles, US
 Oscar Sogliano, Bolivia
 Alan Thornett, Respect National Executive, Britain
 Diosdado Toledano Gonzalez, member of the Presidency of Izquierda Unida/United Left and member of the Permanent Council of the Catalan United Left, Spanish state
 Eric Toussaint, president, Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt, Belgium
 Greg Tucker, National Train Crew Secretary, Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, Britain
 Marcos Tulio Díaz, General Secretary, Construction Union (UBT), Venezuela
 Franco Turigliatto, senator, Party of Communist Refoundation, Italy
 Achin Vanaik, Professor of International Relations, Dept. of Political Science, Delhi University, India
 Jesús Vargas, Coordinator, Carabobo Region of the National Union of Workers (UNT), Venezuela
 Vilma Vivas, Coordinator, Táchira Region of the National Union of Workers (UNT), Venezuela
 Yang Weichung, Workers Democracy Association, Taiwan
 Hector Wesley, Public and Civil Service Union NEC member, Britain
 Niel Wijethilake, General Secretary, Corporation Co-op & Mercantile Union, Sri Lanka
 Howard Zinn, historian, US
 Slavoj Žižek, Slovenian philosopher

To sign this appeal, see the site :

<http://www.petitiononline.com/heloisa1/>

View online : [To sign the appeal in support of Heloisa](#)